THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) to (e) Yes, Sir. Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) has already acquired the land and building for setting up the Software Technology Park (STP) at Guwahati. The building is being renovated so that incubating space can be provided there to the small and medium entrepreneurs. Action is also being taken to procure equipment required for setting up the STP.

STPI and State Governments will jointly be initiating action to attract private investment from the North-Eastern States.

Help in it to Hong Kong

1583. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Hong Kong has sought India's help in information technology;

(b) if so, what was India's response;

(c) what would be the overall benefit that would accrue to India form this; and

(d) whether any decision has been taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been entered into between Government of India and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China on 24.02.2000 for cooperation in the areas of Information Technology and service industries. The areas of common interest are:—

1. Encouraging investment and technology partnerships;
2. Accelerating commercial and industrial exchanges;
3. Fostering business partnerships between companies of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and India;
4. Facilitating technology development efforts;
5. Promoting educational and learning exchange; and
6. Encouraging the exchange of policy and regulatory information.

This MoU is expected to boost bilateral co-operation as well as bilateral trade in the areas of interest.

Indian Labourers in Sharjah

†1584. SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 22 Indian labourers victims of unscrupulous activity of an agent luring the people with a job abroad are living in very miserable conditions in Sharjah and an inhuman treatment is being meted out to them; and

(b) if so, what arrangements have been made by Government to help Indian labourers alongwith the action taken against the above agent?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) and (b) As per the information received from Consulate General of India, Dubai, 22 workers taken to UAE by the Indian partner of a firm had started working since June, 1999, but due to some problem between the Indian partner and the sponsor, visas were not stamped and the workers stopped work after about three months. On intervention by the CGI, Dubai, the labour department has agreed to provide necessary assistance in facilitating stamping of the visas. The sponsor has also agreed to get temporary work permit processed. Alternate jobs have since been located for them and formalities for transfer of visa to new employers are under process.

The workers currently housed in a flat in Sharjah are reported to be in good health. The Indian partner had provided food etc. to them for some time. Now, the Indian association is extending necessary help. The Indian partner who had taken the workers to UAE is presently under Police custody in Sharjah in some other case.

Cheating by overseas Recruiting Agencies

1585. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many of hapless unemployed being cheated by the overseas recruiting agencies especially the computer programme training agencies in the name of providing employment in Gulf and other countries;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.